

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING POETRY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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### ABSTRACT

*The Teaching of English Poetry is a major concern of all our schools and colleges, but in what shape is it and how is it poised, if at all, to take on new tasks critical to the development of awareness and understanding in the young in an age of rapidly evolving information technology.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Major Concern, Information Technology, Schools and Colleges*

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### INTRODUCTION

A poem is a work of art and a display of the craftsmanship of the poet in using words to give expression to his emotions, feelings and experiences. They offer a rich, varied repertoire and are a source of enjoyment for learners and teachers alike. The language that poetry uses is not the same that we normally use in day-to-day communication. This language does not have the same structure as the language of prose. Poetry is 'recreation language'. The poet deliberately uses words in a way that ordinary speakers of the language cannot. His words carry more meaning or multiple meanings than we could normally think of in real-life communication.

Poetry, music and philosophy were once considered to be the highest things in life and to be educated was to grow with habits related to them. Now there is hardly any time for poetry because there are many other things to which we give far greater importance than to poetry. However, we cannot talk of a poem without seeing its relevance to life. Poetry is a serious act and very different from entertainment art. Poetry and life are inseparably related. Understanding poetry depends upon realizing the value of poetry. Many kinds of definitions were given by different Poets and Authors.

- Poetry, the eldest sister of all arts, and parent of most- William Congreve.
- Poetry is truth dwelling in beauty- Gilfillan.
- Poetry is essentially an art of invitation –Sir Philip Sydney.
- Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: It takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility-William Wordsworth.
- Poetry is the breath and final spirit of all knowledge- Wordsworth.
- Poetry is 'A criticism of Life' - Mathew Arnold.

- Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumstances of knowledge. It is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. – P. B. Shelley.

Thus, it is obvious that poetry means different things to different people. The word 'Poetry' comes from the Greek verb which means 'to make'. Poetry is not like any ordinary speech, Poems are written by the people for the people and it is a form of communication. It is inseparable from life and it has a value to us. Poetry offers a life which is vital to the mind. Poetry is like that power, deeds, events and the things that we see around us, gives rise to objective poetry.

## **Type of Poetry**

### **The Lyric**

The lyric is the oldest form of poetry and it is very closely with religion and festival. The lyric was a poem sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument called 'lyre, particularly, among the Greek and the Romans. The lyric of vision is the oldest form of poetry and it also deals with religion and festival. This type of lyric has been mostly found in Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese poetry.

### **The Ode**

The Ode is a form of lyric poem. The Greek poet Pindar established the forms. He had used this poem to glorify the winners of the Olympic and other games. The poetry is marked by free use of myths elevated thought and bold metaphor. It is sometimes used to commemorate an important public occasion. It has an exalted subject matter. The poet is serious in the choice of the subject and the mode of presentation.

It is often addressed directly to the being or objects it treats of. The opening lines contain an apostrophe or appeal which is characteristic of the whole treatment of the poem. E.g. Shelley, **Ode to the West wind** begins with 'O wild West Wind'.

### **The Sonnet**

The Sonnet form most probably originated in Sicily in the thirteenth century. The form arrived in England via France in the sixteenth century. It is called the Italian Sonnet. The Italian poet Petrarch has used this form to a great extent though before that it has been used by Dante. It is also called as Petrarchian and Classical Sonnet. It is composed of two parts:

- A stanza of eight lines or octave
- A stanza of six lines or sestet

The English Sonnet was introduced into England by two politicians Sir Thomas Wyatt and of Surrey on their return from a diplomatic mission in Italy.

### **The Elegy**

The elegy originated in ancient Greece. It is used of any gravely meditative poem. It is written in elegiac measure i.e. a complete composed of a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter i.e. one long and two short syllable, six times in the first time, and five times in the second. The elegy is usually a lamentation for the dead. It is written as a tribute to somebody loved and lost. The famous example is 'Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'.

### **The Idyll**

This word comes from a Greek word meaning 'a little picture'. It is not a distinct species by itself. It sometimes may be a lyric, sometimes is larger poem and sometimes a passage in an elegy, play, epic or ballad. It has no set form and can be given any form. It is associated with relative brevity and the pictorial effect. It is very often used to give a concrete idea of an abstract image. The pictorial effect is achieved by a graphic description. E.g. Wordsworth's 'Lines written in March depicting a spring scene in England after the rain is over and gone'.

### **The Epic**

Epic is the most celebrated form of narrative poetry. It is the highest of the Greek literary forms. It is usually supposed to be heroic, or to contain one action achieved by a hero'. The epic reflects and interprets the past. It gives an account of national organizer enshrines ancient heroic myths central to a culture. In European culture the Illiad and the Odyssey of Homer and the Aeneid of Virgil are the most important epics. In India Ramayana of Valmiki and Mahabharata of Vyas are epics.

### **How Should be a Poem Taught**

Traditional practice in teaching poetry has been to give learners background information about the poet's life., age, society etc. the teacher could direct the learners to the library where he would find many books on the poet's life. It is very important for students is their familiarity with some examples of good literature that would influence their style and thought.

Another practice in the past has been to explain the poem word by word and or line by line, or by paraphrasing it. A good teacher will always leave something for students to do so that they develop their critical faculty. He would allow sufficient time to learners to go deep into the poem and share the experiences expressed by the poet.

The best way to introduce a poem is to read it aloud. It is the responsibility of the teacher to guide the language learning process by:

- Modeling pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm, and oral expression;
- Facilitating comprehension of vocabulary, idioms, cultural aspects, and plot;
- Stimulating interest and conversation, and interacting with the students;
- Creating a student-participatory language learning experience.

However, a teacher should be familiar with the rhythm, pitch and intonation pattern of English. Students must feel the music that words carry with them. The teacher must use recordings now available of poems by actors and by the poets themselves, or he might ask another teacher who he feels can read a poem appropriately, to read the poem in the class so that students fully appreciate the poem. If the poem can be enacted, the teacher should not miss the opportunity of involving students in dramatizing the poem.

Visual aids like pictures, drawings etc can be used to help learners comprehend the poem. Many poems are rich in graphic imagery. Drawings on the board could enhance the interest of students and help them understand a poem better.

It is very important that different activities- individual, pair or group- are designed to involve learners in a poem's

theme. Before a poem is read or listened to, it is important that a warm-up activity or brainstorming is given to arouse learner's curiosity. A warm-up activity could be a nursery rhyme, a song from English or the learner's mother tongue which the learners are asked to sing for identifying similarities.

### **The Use of Language in Poetry**

Skills of language grow most efficiently when the learner is able to practice them actively and systematically.

The pertinent question to be asked here is, does poetry have a place in language teaching even if the students do not have a command over the basic structures? is teaching language the same thing as teaching literature. These questions indicate the different ways in which language and literature relate. Can we ignore language while teaching literature...? is language teaching the same as literature teaching?

Literature is also language. It ensures exposure to the language in its point forms. Breemfit and Carter say 'We believe that there is no such thing as literary language'. (1986:6) when language used in one way is used in another it is called defamilization (Shlousky) where word associations are not predictable in areas of contexts.

Widdowson (1983:15) says that literary language is dislocated from context, set aside, it presupposes no previous or existing situation outside that created by itself. It anticipates no continuation, it exists apart, complete in itself, self-contained within its own pattern. The use of language in usual contexts is what makes the literary. Widdowson calls it the deviant use of language. The use of metaphors similes, symbolism, analogies, all added to the 'unconventional use of language which has no validity in ordinary language interaction'. This seems to exist within a parenthesis. The use of literary language is found where 'categories are unclear, where contraries continue, where there is no security in an established order sustained by conventional language'. The language of literature is different when compared to conventional and traditional associations.

### **The Place of Poetry in English Language Teaching**

Literature is language before it is anything else. Poetry represents a different kind of language from the one commonly associated with communicative functions. Strong arguments have been made that poetry cannot have a place in English language Teaching and that students struggling with the elements of English should not be exposed to the complexities of poetry instead the student can be given plenty of practice in the use of the normal language. However, the reason for teaching poetry is that it is not prose and poetry does not function in the same way as prose. Prose can be taught and a student can learn many things from it. And it exposes the student to a language which is creative and imaginative, it heightens the learner's sensibilities, it sensitized the reader and above all it heightens the reader's awareness of life. So it is very essential to have poetry in ELT.

Literature is fun ! Literature is exciting ! Literature is emotionally and intellectually satisfying ! Literature is life enhancing ! Literature is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. ! It tells us about ourselves and the world we live in; it widens our horizons. It stimulates our imaginations. Teachers task is not only to help students to understand books but to help them to love books and instill in them such enthusiasm that they want to read not only for the examination but for the sheer joy of it all.

The use of language and the related question of literary forms- Prose, Poetry and drama. All the uses of languages, involve elements of thought, feeling and imagination. Imagination is the cohesive element in all forms of utterance, spoken

or written. Poetry is an original form of English literature. Until recently the English looked upon Chaucer as the father of their poetry. Today they trace their literary origins back to the seventh century. A man called Caedman and the unknown author of Beowulf were the first poets.

## CONCLUSIONS

This Article discussed the significance of Poetry in English Language Teaching and it concluded by highlighting the techniques of teaching poetry and the need to incorporate some basic features in English Poetry. The teacher can help pupils to respond to the rhythm of poetry, pupils can be asked to read or recite a poem with rhyme and rhythm either in groups or in chorus.

It is also discussed, how the line aside method in which each pupil reads a line one after another briskly, keeping a continuous rhythmic beat. And the teacher can bring a large variety of audiovisual aids to stimulate the pupil's interest.

This Article also enhances the relationship between the literature and language of English.

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